

United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6250

March 24, 2021

Acting Director Ron Jarmin
U.S. Census Bureau
United States Department of Commerce
Washington, D.C. 20233

Dear Acting Director Jarmin:

As Ranking Member of the Government Operations and Border Management Subcommittee, I am tasked with oversight of the U.S. Census Bureau. I am very concerned about the potential detrimental impact caused by the Bureau's delay in delivering redistricting data to states¹ from April 30 to September 30. This significant delay is jeopardizing states' efforts to redraw their districts in time for state and federal elections.

While I understand and appreciate the unique and unprecedented challenges faced by the Census Bureau in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, I am concerned that the Bureau may have failed to inform the states early enough to mitigate the delay.

As such, I am requesting answers on how this situation arose and ultimately led to a five month delay in redistricting data release. In addition, it is important to understand the actions you have taken, and plan to take, in order to mitigate the harm and uncertainty that these delays have caused.

Please respond to the following questions by April 8, 2021:

- 1) When did the Bureau know that they would not be able to release the redistricting data to states by April 30?
- 2) When did the Bureau officially notify states there would be a significant delay in delivery of the data?
- 3) The Bureau has stated that COVID is the primary factor contributing to the delay in redistricting data. A snowball effect of delays resulting from the initial suspension is predictable but demands proper management and communication.
 - a. What downstream impacts of COVID challenged Bureau employees creating the data files needed to release apportionment and ultimately redistricting data?
 - b. What day did the Bureau begin producing the 2020 Decennial Response File 1 (DRF1)? What day did the Bureau begin producing the 2010 DRF1?
 - c. What day did you begin the data processing phase you are currently in? What day did you begin the same phase in the 2010 Census?
 - d. When does the Bureau expect to transition from apportionment data processing to redistricting data processing? When did the Bureau begin the transition to redistricting data processing in 2010?

¹ P.L. 94-171

- 4) Outline the events that caused the very long delay in data delivery.
 - a. When was the first day the 2020 Census timeline fell behind?
 - b. What actions were undertaken by leadership to catch up at that time?

In addition to the questions above, please provide the original timeline for calendar year 2020 with key Census dates and the actual timeline of the Census events for 2020.

Every American has been faced with unprecedented obstacles throughout this pandemic, and the Census Bureau is no exception. However, it is imperative that this duty, mandated by the Constitution, is conducted successfully with transparency.

I appreciate your prompt attention to this matter. Please contact Phillip Moran at Phillip_moran@hsgac.senate.gov with any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James Lankford". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "L".

James Lankford
United States Senator